AGING**WELL**
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Promoting a More Balanced Long-Term Care System

Nearly 77 million baby boomers will start to turn age 65 by 2008 — that's more than double the current population of seniors. As an unprecedented growth in the elderly population is projected for the 21st century, the population age 85 and older—those most in need of long-term care services—is expected to outpace the rate of growth for the entire elderly population.

What Is Long-Term Care?

According to AARP, the vast majority of persons 50 and older do not require long-term assistance at any given time. However, most people will require assistance at some point in their lives, and most families will face these issues with their older family members.

Long-term care refers to a wide range of supportive services and assistance provided to persons who, as a result of chronic illness or frailty, are unable to be functionally independent on a daily basis. The care that is purchased generally consists of institutional care or formal home- and community-based services. Institutional care is usually provided in a nursing home. Community-based services include a variety of care such as adult day care, home health, chore services, personal care, and transportation, that are meant to help individuals to continue living in their own homes and communities. Theses services are provided either in the older person's home or in the home of their family caregiver.

Who Provides Long-Term Care?

Currently, more than 22.4 million US households are serving in family caregiving roles for persons over the age of 50. That number will increase rapidly as the population ages, and as medical science continues to extend life.

According to a 2003 AARP survey, 88% of individuals receiving long-term care assistance receive this help from family and informal caregivers. A 2002 AARP survey indicates that among persons 50 and older with disabilities, 6% prefer nursing homes, while 17% prefer assisted living, and 73% prefer care at home. Despite this clear preference for home- and community-based care, our formal long-term care system is biased toward institutionalization. Most public and private spending for long-term care still pays for institutional care. There is a need to promote a more balanced system of long-term care to ensure that there are meaningful choices that include nursing home care and community-based alternatives.

Navigating the Current Long-Term Care System

Navigating the long-term care system can be daunting and frustrating for older persons and their family members. The current system can be described at times as being quite disjointed and fragmented. Most states have an array of public and private long-term care programs and services delivered by a variety of state and local agencies, and private nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Many older persons may be placed in nursing homes because they and their family members are not aware of the long-term care options available in their community, including home- and community-based services.

Creating Options in Long-Term Care

The Administration on Aging (AoA) is working to increase the number and quality of choices available to older persons and their caregivers to meet their long-term care needs. This

includes working with states to redirect funds to community-based alternatives and to strengthen the system of support at the community level. This also involves providing older persons and their caregivers easy access to information on the entire range of available service options, and assistance in making informed long-term care choices.

The Aging Services Network has historically played an important role in our nation's long-term care system, and that role continues to grow. The Aging Services Network has been at the forefront of creating community options and coordinated ways for older people to access information and services since the inception of the Older Americans Act in 1965. The Aging Services Network has built the foundation of our formal, community-based long-term care system.

The AoA is partnering with other federal agencies, the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, foundations, and other private sector organizations, and the Aging Services Network to ensure that all older Americans have every opportunity to live independently and with dignity in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. Through these efforts, AoA has established the Aging and Disability Resource Center Program.

Aging and Disability Resource Centers – Improving Access

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded grants to states for the development of Aging and Disability Resource Center Programs to help consumers to learn about and access long-term care supports ranging from in-home services to nursing facility care. The Aging and Disability Resource Center Program represents a collaborative effort of the AoA and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

What Is the Aging and Disability Resource Center Program?

The Aging and Disability Resource Center Program supports state efforts to develop "one-stop shop" programs at the community level that will help people make informed decisions about their service and support options, and serve as the entry point to the long-term care service and support system. States can use these funds to better coordinate and/or redesign their existing systems of information, assistance and access, which currently involve multiple federal, state, and local programs.

Aging and Disability Resource Center programs will provide information and assistance to both public and private pay individuals. Resource Center programs must also serve as the entry point to publicly administered long-term supports including those funded under Medicaid, the Older Americans Act and state revenue programs.

Whom Is the Program Designed to Assist?

States must target Resource Center services to the older adult population and at least one additional population (i.e., individuals with physical disabilities, serious mental illness, and/or mental retardation/developmental disabilities).

What Is the AoA/CMS Vision for Resource Centers?

The goal of the Aging and Disability Resource Center Program is to empower individuals to make informed choices and to streamline access to long-term care support. The vision is to have Resource Centers in every community serving as highly visible and trusted places where people can turn for information on the full range of long-term support options.

In many communities, long-term care support services are administered by multiple agencies and have complex, fragmented, and often duplicative intake, assessment, and eligibility functions. A single, coordinated system of information and access for all persons seeking long term support will minimize confusion, enhance individual choice and support informed decision-making. It will also improve the ability of state and local governments to manage resources and to monitor program quality through centralized data collection and evaluation.

What Services Are Provided?

Aging and Disability Resource Center programs are required to provide the following services at the community level: Public Education; Information and Counseling on available options; Access to Public Programs, including Medicaid nursing facility care and waiver services; Coordination with Other Programs (e.g., disease prevention, nutrition, transportation, housing); and Prospective Planning to help people to plan ahead for their long-term service and supports needs.

How Will Performance Be Measured?

States must establish performance goals and indicators that will allow them to measure their progress in helping consumers make informed decisions, streamlining access to services and supports, and achieving system efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

To support the local grant projects, AoA and CMS are funding a complementary technical assistance program. This technical assistance will be tailored to the specific needs of each grantee and will allow for peer support between projects.

For additional information on the Aging and Disability Resource Centers including program descriptions, please go to http://www.aoa.gov/prof/aging_dis/aging_dis.asp
or the CMS web site at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/newfreedom.

For additional information on the Administration on Aging, please visit the AoA website at http://www.aoa.gov.

Other Resources:

National Conference of State Legislatures
http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/forum/ltc/ltcmain.htm

National Governors Association
http://www.nga.org/center/topics/1,1188,C_CENTER_ISSUE^D_611,00.html